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Security Council

Sixty-fourth year

Provisional

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Tuesday, 23 June 2009, 10.15 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. İlkin	(Turkey)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Ebner
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Du Xiaocong
	Costa Rica	Mr. Guillermet
	Croatia	Mr. Vilović
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Mexico	Mr. Puente
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Ms. Rice
	Viet Nam	Mr. Hoang Chi Trung

Agenda

The situation in Guinea-Bissau

Report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and on the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in that country (S/2009/302)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Guinea-Bissau

Report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and on the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in that country (S/2009/302)

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Joseph Mutaboba, Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Mutaboba to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Her Excellency Mrs. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Brazil.

It is so decided.

I invite Mrs. Viotti to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2009/302, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and on the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in that country.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Mutaboba and Mrs. Viotti.

I now give the floor to Mr. Mutaboba.

Mr. Mutaboba: It is a pleasure to be with the Council today and to present the thirty-fifth report (S/2009302) of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in that country (UNOGBIS).

In particular, I would like to brief the Council on the continuing political and military tensions following the assassinations of President Vieira and the Chief of the General Staff, General Tagme Na Waie, preparations for the presidential elections and the recommendations for the establishment of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau.

The apparent calm following the assassinations of President Vieira and General Tagme in March 2009 was disrupted when the Minister of Territorial Administration and a candidate in the presidential elections, Mr. Baciro Dabó, was killed by armed men at his home in the early hours of 5 June. Another leading Member of Parliament and a former Minister of Defence, Mr. Helder Proença, was killed together with his driver and bodyguard in a car ambush at approximately the same time. The State intelligence services reported that both men were resisting arrest over involvement in an alleged coup attempt. There were also other arrests, including that of a former Prime Minister, Mr. Faustino Imbali, in connection with this alleged coup.

With regard to the presidential elections, these violent events took place on the eve of the official launch of those elections and threatened to disrupt the election schedule. One candidate, Mr. Pedro Infanda, who is also the lawyer of former Navy Chief of Staff Bubo Na Tchuto, withdrew from the presidential race. That brings the number of candidates down from 13 to 11.

However, let me stress that the preparations for the organization of the elections as well as for the international observation remain, as we speak, on track. During Under-Secretary-General Pascoe's visit to Guinea-Bissau on 13 June, the interim President Raimundo Pereira confirmed that presidential elections would be held as scheduled on 28 June.

The United Nations Development Programme is providing technical support and UNOGBIS will coordinate the activities of international electoral observers from the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the

International Organization of la Francophonie and the West African Economic and Monetary Union. The European Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and some individual countries will also be deploying electoral observers.

With regard to security developments, the general situation is fragile and a sense of insecurity palpable among both the elite and the general population, as proved by the rumours of the death of the interim Chief of General Staff, which caused panic among the population in Bissau. Commander Induta was forced to give a radio interview to prove that the rumour was unfounded, to assuage the fears not only of the general population, but also those of his supporters in the armed forces.

There is also a high degree of distrust and scepticism, particularly over reports that the two politicians were killed because they had resisted arrest. There have been four major incidents of violence and/or alleged coups since August 2008. This is not the ideal setting for peaceful elections, of course.

With respect to the Commission of Inquiry, the investigations into the assassinations of President Vieira and General Tagme Na Waie are ongoing. The parallel military investigation into the bomb blast that killed General Tagme was completed and the report handed over to the Government. The Commission of Inquiry, headed by the Prosecutor General, questioned the validity of the military investigation and the lack of cooperation by the military.

The Government sent a letter dated 22 May to the Secretary-General requesting the setting up of an international commission of inquiry into the double assassinations of President Vieira and General Tagme. It also requested that the African Union, ECOWAS, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States be invited to assist the international commission.

Currently, the United Nations is working with ECOWAS and the African Union to ensure that appropriate international expertise and logistical support are provided to the national Commission. International support will need to be provided, recognizing that the responsibility to address impunity and bring the perpetrators to justice must rest with the national authorities and be seen by the population as a national undertaking. This is the only way that we can contribute to making Guinea-Bissau's justice system credible in the eyes of its citizens and the international community. The presence of international experts naturally has security implications that need to be considered.

With regard to human rights developments, six people, including three civilians, are in detention at various armed forces sites in Bissau in connection with the alleged coup in June. They include the Director General of intelligence services, who was detained simply because he refused to sign the intelligence services' communiqué of 5 June on the existence of a coup attempt. The military has not yet handed over evidence or the detainees to the judicial authorities, despite various Government requests that it do so. The detainees are being held in contravention of the law, and the three civilians have had access to the Red Cross but have yet to be granted free access to relatives, lawyers or doctors.

As to the economic and social situation in the country, the Government, which won an overwhelming victory in the legislative elections seven months ago, has been weakened by the paralysis over the March and June events and mounting governance and security challenges. As a result, the Government's focus has moved away from delivering on its electoral promises of paying civil service salaries and improving social services and infrastructure. Disgruntlement over continuing arrears, teachers' strikes and the political and military instability have considerably eroded the political capital that the Government enjoyed in November 2008. This will require the elected President, irrespective of what party he or she — there is one female candidate — may be a member of, and the party that won the 2008 legislative elections, to work together in the interests of creating a political environment conducive to stable governance for the rest of the legislature. This enterprise will require a selfless spirit among the political class, in particular, and a healthy spirit of collaboration between the institutions of the State. Continued instability is the desire of spoilers who benefit from a weak State, organized crime and drug trafficking.

The Secretary-General's report includes proposals for the creation of a United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau. This proposal comes in recognition of the need to strengthen and enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations presence in Guinea-Bissau at this critical time of rampant poverty, political tension and instability. The

proposed Integrated Peacebuilding Office will support the efforts of the Guinea-Bissau authorities and focus on the reform of the defence and security sectors, the promotion of the rule of law and human rights, enhancing political dialogue and national reconciliation, and strengthening national institutions.

The Integrated Office will also support the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and contribute to the coordination and coherence of international efforts in Guinea-Bissau. The Office will work in close partnership with the African Union, ECOWAS, the African Development Bank, the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. In particular, there is a call for the Integrated Office to coordinate the many security sector reform initiatives undertaken by the international community in Guinea-Bissau. Only through coordinated, coherent and concerted efforts will we be able to make a real difference in the reform of the security sector, which is a sine qua non for peace consolidation in the country.

Allow me to appeal for the Council's support in ensuring that the Office is well resourced and fully staffed so that it can effectively fulfil its mandate and make a real difference in the lives of the people of Guinea-Bissau.

In conclusion, the challenges facing Guinea-Bissau are enormous. Although the Government and the people of Guinea-Bissau have the primary responsibility to address these challenges, we in the international community must stay engaged and provide the much-needed support for critical reforms in the justice, defence and security sectors, as well as for public administration reform, for the work of the Commission of Inquiry, and most urgently for the peaceful conduct of the presidential elections.

The President: I thank Mr. Mutaboba for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mrs. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti.

Mrs. Viotti: I thank the Security Council and you, Sir, for the kind invitation to participate in this debate in my capacity as Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

I would like to express appreciation to the Representative of the Secretary-General in Guinea-Bissau, Mr. Joseph Mutaboba, for his comprehensive briefing.

Since 8 April, when I last appeared before the Council, a number of developments have affected peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau, in particular the assassinations of Mr. Baciro Dabó, a candidate in the upcoming presidential election, and Mr. Helder Proença, a Member of Parliament and former Minister of Defence. The Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission joined this Council and other international organizations in strongly condemning such actions.

As is widely known, the assassinations took place only three months after the brutal killings of President João Bernardo Vieira and General Tagme Na Waie and were preceded by episodes of political unrest and physical attacks on public figures. The sequence of events suggests the continuation of a pattern of using violence for political aims and for settling old scores. Aside from being utterly deplorable, such a pattern is counterproductive, as the sad reality of the past decades has shown. Only by upholding the rule of law and the constitutional order will Bissau Guineans be able to break the cycle of violence and advance towards the consolidation of peace and development. A full and credible investigation of the assassinations of March and June is therefore necessary and must be supported.

In spite of those tragic and worrisome events, it is reassuring that the presidential elections will take place on 28 June, as scheduled. Every effort must be made to ensure that they are conducted in an atmosphere of tranquillity, that the electoral process is free, fair and transparent, and that the results are respected.

Holding elections in such a manner is crucial not only to help to normalize political life by ensuring the legitimacy of the country's political leadership, but also to enable a process of national reconciliation to be launched. The upcoming vote, if properly conducted, may pave the way for a true dialogue among the main political forces and lead to an environment conducive to a peaceful and democratic resolution of disputes. Such an endeavour, which is crucial for peacebuilding, must be encouraged and supported by the international community.

The mitigation of the serious socio-economic problems of the country and the adoption of a long-term strategy for its development are also critical to peacebuilding. It is important that the international community take an integrated approach to peacebuilding

in Guinea-Bissau, as the political and economic sides of the equation are mutually supportive.

The political instability in Guinea-Bissau since March has shown the need for the country-specific configuration to redouble its efforts. We have remained engaged throughout that difficult period. On 17 April I visited Guinea-Bissau for consultations with Government authorities, including with interim President Raimundo Pereira, Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Júnior and Minister for Defence Artur Silva. Our conversations focused on Peacebuilding Commission support for the presidential elections and on the heightened need to vigorously pursue the reform of the security sector.

On 20 April, I participated in the round table on security sector reform held in Praia, Cape Verde. The meeting provided an opportunity for a presentation by the Government of Guinea-Bissau of its plans and proposals on security sector reform and for a thorough discussion with international partners. Among other considerations, the outcome of the meeting pointed to the need to set up a pension fund for members of the military who will go into retirement and to ensure realistic and yet attractive conditions for the reintegration of former combatants into civilian life. A short-term plan of action is expected to be developed in order to guide future actions.

The country-specific meeting will continue its engagement with Guinea-Bissau by encouraging and supporting a national dialogue on peacebuilding and reconciliation after the elections. Soon afterwards, it will be important for the meeting to re-engage with national stakeholders in tackling the priorities outlined in the strategic framework for peacebuilding, especially security sector reform, youth employment and the fight against drug trafficking. I also intend to launch a discussion within the country-specific meeting about a possible recommendation on a second tranche of Peacebuilding Fund resources and to continue consultations regarding a possible donors' conference later this year. The continued dialogue with international financial institutions also remains extremely important. We welcome the recent approval of the interim strategy note of the World Bank, as well as the approval of a new credit line to the country.

The success of peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau requires a stronger and more coherent United Nations presence on the ground. That is why the recommendations contained in the report (S/2009/302) of the Secretary-General concerning the transformation of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau into an integrated office deserve our full support. They are timely and well founded. Giving the United Nations Office in Guinea-Bissau a robust mandate, along with the corresponding resources, is the most politically wise and financially cost-effective decision that the Security Council and the General Assembly can make today in support of the country.

The President: I thank Mrs. Viotti for her briefing. There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.